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WISH YOU HAPPY NEW YEAR!

While stepping into 1978 it is interesting to remember that it was exactly a hundred years ago, in 1878, that the sewing machines were first used for book-binding. You certainly know that printing began in China. The oldest printed book discovered in the year 1900, is one that was produced in that country in A.D. 868. With Johan Gutenberg of Germany began the process of modern printing. That was in the middle of 15th century.

Has the history of the printed book been quite long? The answer will depend on what we think of the age of our civilization. However, whether we look upon the history of the printed book as long or short, it has little to do with the age of literature which is as old as the thinking man. Innumerable stories and verses have been lost to time. Some have survived. One such series of stories are those famous as the *Arabian Nights*. It is difficult to say when they were born. They were already popular in the Near East, circulating orally, in the 10th century. Since their translation into other languages in the 18th century they have continued to enjoy undiminished popularity all over the world. With this issue we begin to present a selection from these immortal tales. Also we begin serialising a fiction, *The Prince and the Wizard*.

With these presents we wish you a happy New Year!



GOLDEN WORDS OF YORE

दोषो गुणाय गुणिनां महदपि दोषाय दोषिणां सुकृतम् ।
तृणमिव दुग्धाय गवां दुग्धमिव विषाय सर्पिणाम् ॥

Doṣo guṇāya guṇinām mahadapi doṣāya doṣiṇām sukr̥tam
Tṛṇamiva dugdhāya gavām dugdhamiva viṣāya sarpāṇām

With one who is virtuous by nature, even a defect turns into a merit; but with one evil in nature, even a merit turns vicious. Straw eaten by the cow turns into milk whereas milk drunk by the serpent turns into poison.

The Subhasitaratnabhandagaram

धनानि जीवितं चैव परार्थे प्राज्ञ उत्सृजेत् ।
सन्निमित्ते वरं त्यागो विनाशे नियते सति ॥

Dhanāni jīvitam caiva parārthe prājña utsrjet
Sannimित्ते varam tyāgo vināśe niyate sati

The enlightened man offers his wealth and even his life for the good of others, for he knows that these things are bound to go away even otherwise.

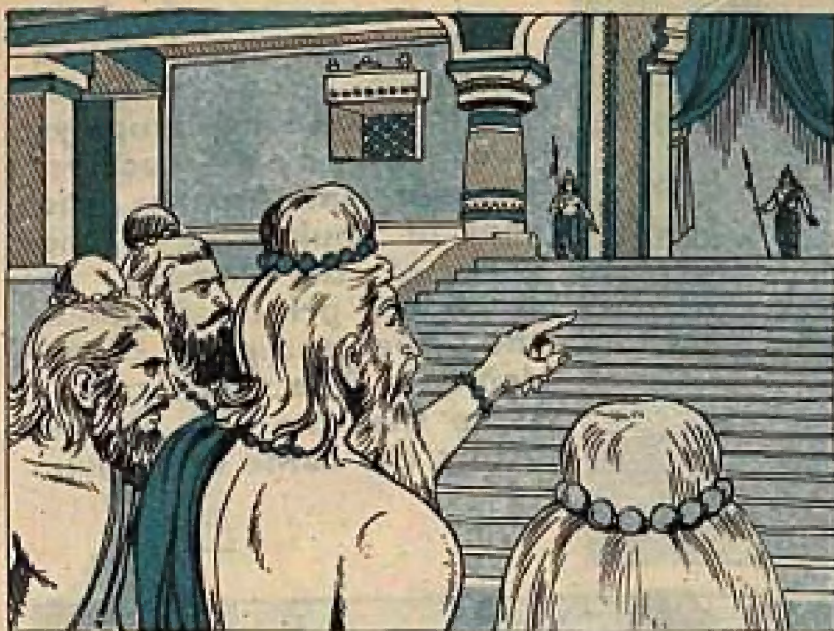
The Hitopadeshah

बालादपि ग्रहीतव्यं युक्तमुक्तं मनीषिभिः ।
रवेरविषये किं न प्रदीपस्य प्रकाशनम् ॥

Bālādapi grahītavyam yuktamuktam manīṣibhiḥ
Raveraviṣaye kim na pradīpasya prakāśanam

The wise should cordially receive the right opinion of even a child. Does not a lamp give us light when there is no sun?

The Hitopadeshah

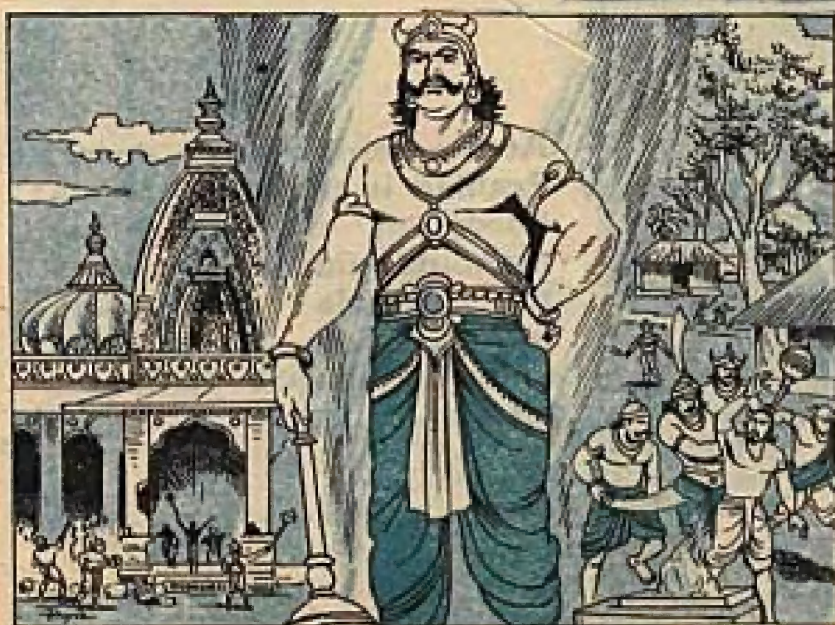


STORY OF INDIA— 13

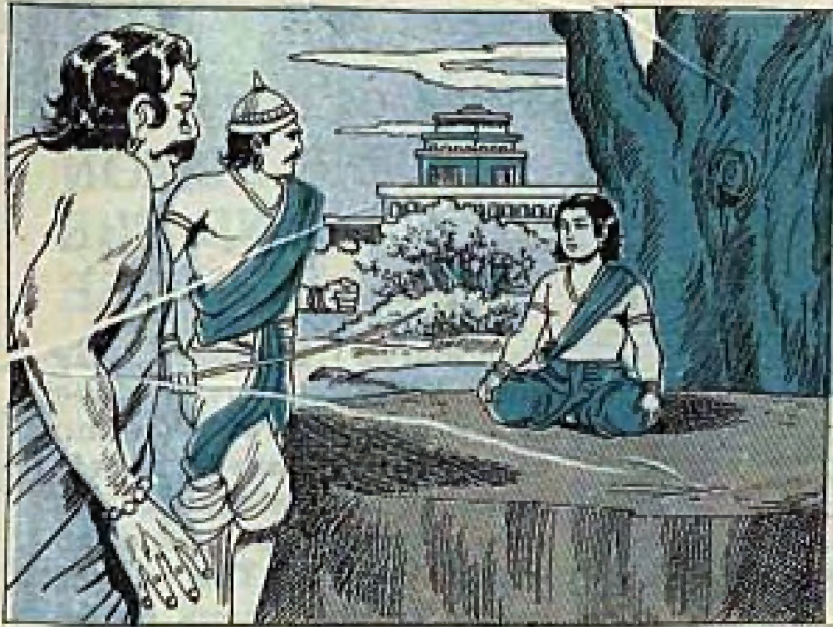
THE DEMON AND THE DEVOTEE

Gundharva brothers, Jay and Vijay, guarded the house of Lord Vishnu. Once they behaved rudely towards a delegation of rishis who had come to meet Vishnu. The angry rishis cursed them to be born as demons.

Vijay sat in penance and invoked the Grace of Brahma. He got a boon by the Virtue of which neither men nor animals could kill him; he could not be killed either on the land or in the water; nor could he be killed either during the day or during the night. Further, no weapon could harm him.

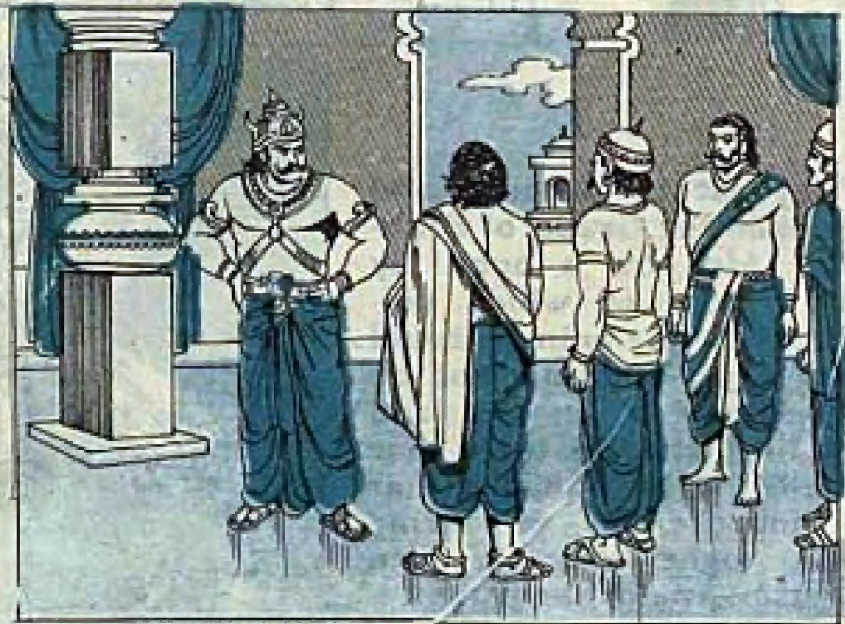


Vijay was born as a demon and became famous as Hiranayakashipu, the king of demons. He forgets all about his previous life and turns hostile to Vishnu. Temples are destroyed and devotees are harassed at his order.



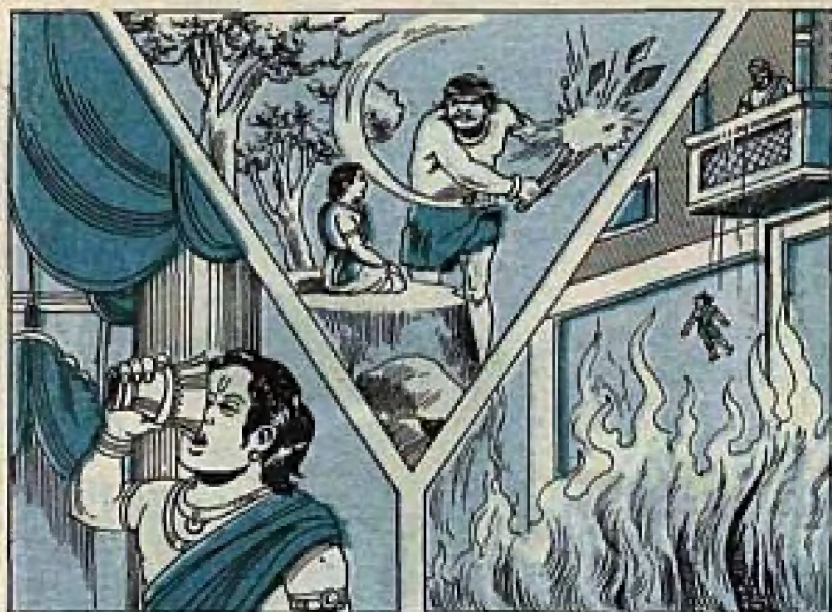
Hiranyakashyipu has a charming son - Prahlad. The demon-king employs two learned teachers, Shandha and Amarka, the sons of Shukracharya, the guru of the demons, to teach the prince all about the power and glory of the demons. The teachers observe that the boy always utters the name of Vishnu.

"What use having a son who would disbelieve in the supremacy of the demons and utter the name of Vishnu?" shouted Hiranyakashyipu. He feared that Prahlad would make a bad example to other demons and decided to sacrifice him.



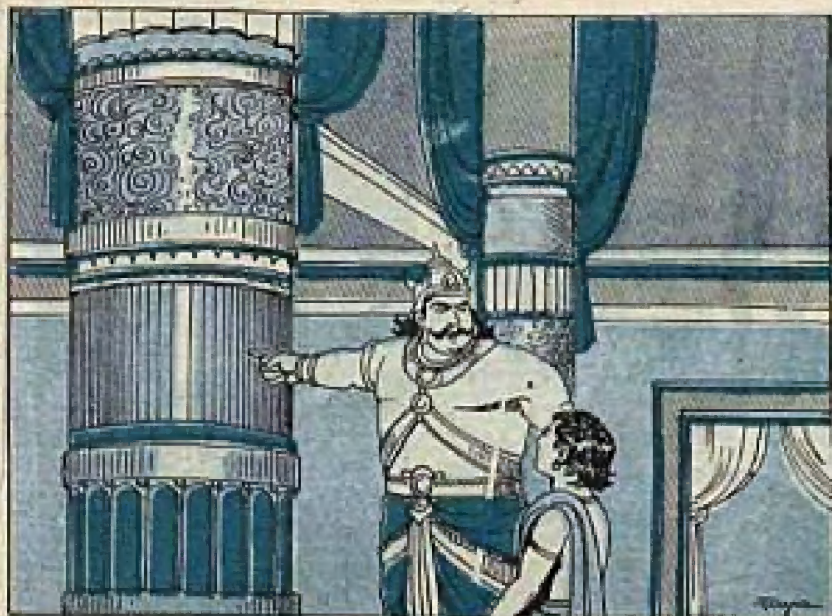
At the demon-king's order, Prahlad is thrown before a horde of elephants. The mahouts guide the elephants to trample the young prince. But he emerges unhurt, Vishnu's name on his lips.

Hiranyakashyipu was surprised at Prahlad's escape. But far greater surprises awaited him, for, Prahlad did not die even when made to drink poison. A murderer's sword broke into pieces as soon as it touched the boy. Even when thrown from the balcony into a fire, Prahlad remained unscathed.



"What is the magic by which you escape all dangers? Speak out frankly," demanded Hiranyakashyipu of his son. "To be frank, father, I know no magic. It is Vishnu who saves me, for I continue to call Him," replied Prahlad. The reply only infuriated Hiranyakashyipu further.

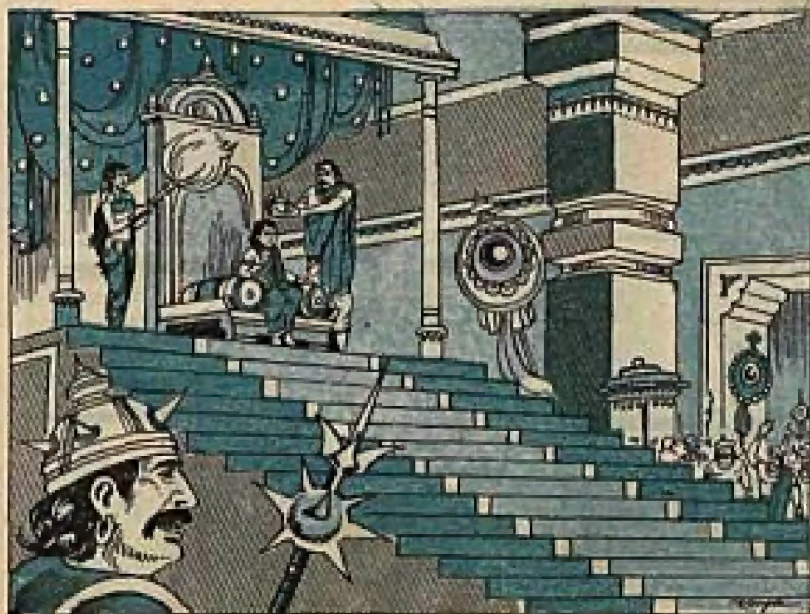
"How can your Vishnu hear you even when you are not before his image?" asked the demon-king. "He can hear me, for he is present everywhere!" replied Prahlad. "Do not speak nonsense. Do you mean to say that he is even present there in that pillar?" asked the demon-king.





"Indeed, He is present in that pillar too," replied Prahlad. "You impudent blockhead! Show me your Vishnu in the pillar!" shouted Hiranyakashyapu and he planted a violent kick on the pillar. The pillar collapsed.

Out of the crumbling pillar emerged Vishnu as Narasimha—Man-Lion. He caught hold of the demon-king and placing him on his own thighs, tore him by his nails. It was twilight, neither day nor night. Narasimha was neither man nor animal. The nails were no weapons.



The young Prahlad ascended the throne. By his deep faith he proved how nothing in this world—not even the crude matter—was devoid of the Divine's Presence. He further proved that even one born of a demon could be a great devotee.

The Arabian Nights

THE MAGIC HORSE

"Any more wonder?" asked the King of Persia. That was the day in a year when the king loved to witness all that was wonderful. Magicians and wizards gathered in dozens to demonstrate their tricks and feats. They returned with bagfuls of pure gold.

"Last but not the least, my

lord, here is a wooden horse," said a fellow who looked like the cousin of a scarecrow.

"You sport before the King of Persia who owns ten thousand horses, the best in the world, a wooden horse and call it wonderful!" demanded the king, his face red like an over-ripe orange.



"My lord, my wooden horse can drive your ten thousand real horses to hide in shame," claimed the fellow. Next he hopped on to it and gave a gentle twist to its left ear, and lo and behold! the horse rose to the sky.

Higher and higher went the horse and its rider, leaving the king and the crowd look up agape. They descended ten minutes later—the scarecrow sporting a proud smile.

"Price, please?" asked the king when he found his tongue.

"The princess!" replied the fellow.

Yes, he would agree to no other price than the princess to wife, not even the most charming chief maid of the princess.

The prince who observed the feat and heard the negotiation with great interest suddenly jumped onto the horse and twisted its left ear. Next moment he was seen disappearing beyond the clouds.

"Ha ha!" laughed the king. "He loves his sister too well to allow you to marry her," said the king.

"But how is the prince going to return? He never learnt the trick! Ha, ha!" laughed the fellow.

The king looked as gloomy as an overcast sky. "Dump this fellow in a dungeon!" he ordered. The man pleaded that he was not to blame for the rashness of the prince. "You are to blame for your laugh," growled the king.

High over the city and the hills flew the magic horse. It carried the prince through layers of cloud-of silver, gold and diamond hue. By and by the moon grew big and bright, and a million and a billion stars twinkled in the sky which had never looked so splendidly blue and twinkled brighter.

The prince now decided to return and realised that he knew not how to. But clever that he was, he gave a twist to the horse's right ear. The horse began to descend. But the prince now realised that he knew not how to lead the horse to a particular destination.

The horse came down and down and stood on the roof of a huge castle. All was quiet. Leaving the horse in a corner of the roof, the daring prince descended through the stairs into a wide hall filled with armed men—all asleep. He crossed the hall and entered a smaller hall filled with armed women—

all asleep. He crossed it and entered a magnificent room in which, on an ivory còt, lay a beauty—asleep too.

“What a beauty!” whispered the prince to himself bringing his face as close to the beauty’s as decency would permit. But the princess opened her eyes wide and looked amazed.

“Sorry for disturbing your sleep,” said the prince.

“You ought to be sorry for violation of several other palace rules before being sorry for that,” said the princess.

“I, the prince of Persia, am here seeking your hospitality, led astray - but now I doubt if astray is the word - by a magic horse.

“I, the princess of Bengal, am not sure that I am not dreaming. But you are welcome,” replied the beauty.

The princess woke up her pet maids and arranged for the prince to be lodged in a comfortable private apartment. She continued to overwhelm the prince with her lavish hospitality even after she had been pretty sure that he was not a figure in a dream.

Days passed and weeks. The two realised that it was going to be very hard for one to separate from the other.

“Let us first escape to Persia. Your father would surely then agree to our marriage,” proposed the prince.



The princess loved adventure. At midnight they rode the magic horse and rose high. Again the prince remembered that he knew not how to lead the horse to a particular destination. However, for a trial, he whispered in the horse's ear, "To the capital of Persia!" And the wooden horse had more than a mere horse sense, a clear sense of geography. It changed its direction. To the great delight of the prince, soon the towers of his town were visible below the clouds.

But, instead of going straight to the palace, the prince landed in a garden and leaving the horse and the princess there, hurried to report to his father.

The king jumped up in joy. The first thing he did was to free the owner of the wooden horse. He gave him a bagful of gold and a kindly smile. But as soon as the fellow heard from others all about the prince's return with a beautiful bride, he ran towards the garden. While the king was still organising a procession to go and receive the princess of Bengal, the fellow met her and said, "The king and the prince have sent for you. Hurry up!"

The princess, impatient for

the prince, did not even reflect why a scarecrow should be sent to take her to the palace. The fellow sat on the magic horse and the princess too jumped onto it. Up they went instantly.

The great royal procession saw the horse rising into the frothy clouds. The king swooned away, more in anger than in sorrow.

"Father! Either I will come back with the princess, or I will not be back at all," said the prince when the king sat up.

The king nodded understandingly and wiped his eyes. The prince galloped away.

The scarecrow landed in a forest in a faraway country. "You must marry me," he demanded taking hold of the princess with violence.

"I will rather die," shrieked the princess struggling to free herself.

"If die one must, it must be the other one," said a roaring voice from behind. Next moment the kidnapper was seen lying slain and the princess taken hold of by a rider.

"Who are you?" asked the princess.

"I am one who marries the damsels he saves," replied the

rider. The princess shrieked again. Although many heard her cry, nobody uttered a word, for her captor was the sultan of the land. However, she continued to scream.

She was imprisoned in a beautiful mansion. Physician after physician came to cure her. If one lost a part of his beard to

the princess, another the full. And there was no physician sans beard. The screaming princess was growing ever more violent, even ready to bite.

"You must not go near a biting princess," advised the sultan's granny. "A lady's teeth bear poison. And a bite of a princess – a mad princess at that – might prove incurably poisonous."

At last came a young physician who claimed that he had cured the King of Kabul of his baldpate and the King of Kashmir of his bulging belly. Hopefully, the sultan led him to the princess. But as soon as the screaming princess came to tear his beard, the physician uttered and he uttered it in the style of muttering a hymn – "This beard, O princess, have I grown on account of you!"

The princess knew the voice of her prince. She stopped screaming. The prince told the sultan to leave them alone for a while. The sultan obliged him.

The prince hit upon a plan and discussed it with the princess and left her. He asked the sultan how he got such a wonderful prize as the princess of Bengal. The sultan told him



all about the magic horse which of course the prince knew.

"Now I understand. The princess has got her craziness from the magic horse. I can make the magic horse suck the craziness out of her if she sits on it for an hour while it is on the ground," said the prince.

The magic horse was brought from the royal museum and the princess was asked to sit on it. The prince recited strange sorts of hymns as he lit a fire around the horse. The sultan was amazed to see the result, for no more was the princess wroth against a beard although beards galore were available handy.

When the flames and the smoke enveloped the horse, the

prince hopped on to it and gave its left ear a prompt twist. They rose into a clear sky. The prince laughed and the princess giggled looking below. The sultan's bodyguards hurled their weapons and courtiers their bejewelled staffs. Only the clown's cap touched the tip of the horse's tail.

In a few hours they were in Persia. They married as soon as the prince had shaved off his beard.

The king of Bengal was proud to get a son-in-law who moved about in a flying horse, for the sons-in-law of fellow kings had nothing better than ordinary horses to trot about.





THE MIRACLE BIRD

A diamond necklace of great value disappeared from the bedroom of the Queen of Kaushikpur.

The king was greatly exercised over the theft, but he remained calm. Summoning all such attendants of the palace who worked in the queen's apartment, he announced, "I give you three days. He who has stolen the necklace must return it to me privately."

But three days passed without the necklace being recovered. On the fourth day the king summoned all the palace attendants to the court. There prevailed a grave silence. The king was about to speak when there appeared, suddenly, a tantrik with a parrot on his shoulder.

"My lord, while passing through this town I heard about

the theft in the palace. Now, here is a miracle bird. If you question it, it can certainly reveal the name of the thief!"

There were whispers among the attendants. Curiosity was written large on the faces of the courtiers.

"O kind good hermit, if you permit me, I will first like to test your parrot's power by putting some other questions to it," proposed the king.

"You may try my parrot in whatever way you like, my lord," replied the tantrik.

The parrot was placed before the king. "How many attendants work in the inner apartment of the palace?" was the first question the king put to it.

All waited with bated breath to hear the parrot speak.

"Fiftythree," was the parrot's reply. And it was correct!

"Can you name some of them?" asked the king again.

At once the parrot uttered the names of four or five servants.

The courtiers applauded the parrot's feat. The attendants looked at each other and stood glum.

"No doubt, the parrot can disclose the thief. But I wish to give the thief yet another chance. If he confesses his guilt to me this evening, I will spare him any severe punishment. Otherwise we will let the parrot expose him in the open court tomorrow morning," announced the king.

The courtiers praised the king for his patience and compassion.

Late in the evening, while the king relaxed alone, an attendant sneaked into his presence and falling at his feet confessed

to his guilt and returned the necklace. The king dismissed him from service, but gave him no other punishment.

At dinner, the king whispered to his wife's younger brother, the young prince of the neighbouring kingdom, "Congratulations for your successful acting in the role of the tantrik. The scheme has proved a success."

The prince smiled.

Needless to say, the pet parrot of the prince had been taught the right answers to the two questions the king put to it. But those present in the court thought that the bird had some strange powers. The attendants grew sure that it will be able to give out the thief's name. And this impression served the purpose.

The king presented the parrot with a gold chain.



GURU NANAK

"Kalu! Kalu, your cows have eaten up my crop altogether. Your good-for-nothing son is to be seen nowhere!" complained a farmer to his neighbour.

Kalu was angry. He ran into the field at once. The cows were there all right, but where was his cowherd son? "Nanak! Nanak!! Where are you?" he shouted. A few friends joined him in his search for the boy. Before long the boy was discovered under a tree, lost in

meditation.

"What are you doing, you fool, closing your eyes while the cows are destroying our neighbours' crop?" demanded the father, giving a shake to the boy.

Nanak opened his eyes. There was no shock or anger in them. However, he smiled, apologetically. There was something charming about him which wouldn't allow the father to be any more rude towards him.





Kalu turned to the farmer and said, "Brother, I am sorry for my son's conduct. I will pay the price of the crop you have lost to my cows. Let us go and see the extent of your loss."

They requested two or three respectable villagers to accompany them to evaluate the farmer's loss. But lo and behold! On reaching the cornfield they were amazed to find the entire crop standing intact!

So goes the legend.

Everybody in Talwandi—now known as Nankana Sahib where Nanak was born in 1469, knew that he was a boy with very unusual interests. He would often escape into a nearby forest in search of holy men. If he found them discussing religion or philosophy, he would sit down listening to them, in the process forgetting the need for food or

sleep.

Kalu felt anxious about his son. He wanted to see the boy flourish as a prosperous man. To catch him in the worldly net, he got Nanak married when the boy was only fourteen. Nanak lived a family life for some years, but he was never given to it entirely. His mind roamed about in spheres high and sublime. He spent much of his time in meditation and composing and singing sweet lyrics of profound spiritual value.

Like Kabir, he looked at man as a human being—a child of God—and not as either Hindu or Muslim. He did not give any value to the practice of religious rituals. As a Kshatriya youth, he was required to wear the sacred thread. But he declined to put it on. When his elders took him to task for his violating the tradition, he said that he would wear only the thread which would not be soiled, would not snap or be burnt, and would accompany him to the other world after his death!

When asked how such a thread could ever be found, he explained, "If compassion be the cotton, contentment the thread, self-control the knot,

and Truth the twist, that would be the thread which the soul could wear. Such a thread could not be soiled, could not snap or be burnt. Such a thread was sure to go with one to the world beyond."

Nanak soon came to be looked upon as a guru. People from both Hindu and Muslim communities turned his disciples. His teaching was simple, yet it had the force of his conviction. He inspired his disciples to constantly meditate on God and pray for His mercy. "There is no limit to God's mercy, nor is there any limit to His power of granting gifts," he taught.

One instance will suffice to

tell us the influence Nanak exercised on the people who came in contact with him. One evening, while travelling through an unfamiliar area, he was requested by a fellow named Sajjan to spend the night as his guest. This fellow had built for himself a reputation as a charitable man. He had built a temple as well as a mosque to satisfy both the Hindu and the Muslim pilgrims. He offered his hospitality to such travellers who looked wealthy. At night, while the guest was asleep, he killed him and appropriated whatever wealth the victim was carrying.

Sajjan thought that Nanak



must be a wealthy traveller. After dinner, Nanak began to sing. Sajjan and his lieutenants sat down before him with a show of devotion.

Nanak sang, "The cranes sit beside the water looking like devotees in meditation. But their hungry eyes are set on the fish!...Those who show themselves as our friends are indeed not so!...O Nanak, of no avail is human cleverness and feigned goodness...God's love alone can save us!"

Sajjan had no doubt left in his mind that Nanak had been able to find out his evil motive. Filled with shame and a deep sense of repentance, he at once

fell at Nanak's feet and confessed to his sins. The kind guru accepted him as a disciple.

Out of Nanak's teaching grew Sikhism—a religion which was meant for showing man a straight path to honest living and simple faith. When he knew that his end was nearing, he appointed his faithful disciple, Lehna, to succeed him as the leader of the new faith. His two sons protested, but the guru remained firm in his decision which was based on a true assessment of his disciples.

Guru Nanak passed away in 1539, leaving behind him a faith which was to grow stronger and wider through many trials and tribulations.



The Prince and the WIZARD

Far from the human locality, the hills were wrapped up in clouds. Although it was raining since the evening, the clouds did not seem to get any thinner even at midnight.

Flashes of lightning were followed by thunder at every other minute. And the sound of the thunder echoed and re-echoed in the wide range of hills. Lightning showed the tall, bushy trees swaying violently in the strong wind. But the man who was advancing towards a cave with firm steps did not seem to be aware of the angry mood of the nature. Or, maybe, he did not care.

His strong muscles glistened in the lightning and so did his magnificent locks of hair on the head, his robust pair of moustaches and his beard. The

round red mark on his forehead had got disfigured in the rain and that added to the eeriness of his tall figure.

But he was not alone. He was followed by a shorter-and younger fellow whose hair fell downward covering his face altogether. It was not difficult to understand that he was practising some strange discipline and that peculiar style of his hair was a part of it.

"Stop here, Mangal," the bearded man turned back and commanded his follower in a grave tone.

Mangal seemed surprised. He murmured, "Well, guruji..."

"I must be alone with the deity, Bairavi, for a while. Do not ask me why," said the bearded man in an ominous tone.

"Who am I, your humble disciple, to question your conduct? Don't I know that you are the wisest wizard in the world?" said Mangal with humility.

The wizard now focused his gaze on the huge boulder that had blocked the passage into the cave. He mumbled some incantation and waved his hand. The boulder moved away of its own.

The wizard stepped in. It was awfully dark. But his

accustomed feet found no difficulty in going ahead through the tunnel.

At the end of the tunnel was a hole. He jumped into it. Next moment he stood in a spacious underground chamber. It was lighted by weird sparks coming out of the eyes of the heads of a dozen of tigers arranged in two rows. At the centre stood a fearful image in stone. Its eyes looked alive and piercing. Its curled lips seemed to display a sarcastic smile.

The wizard stood in silence, focusing his gaze on the image. A few minutes passed. Suddenly he burst into a wild laughter.

"Ha ha ha!!"

The laughter resounded fearfully. The smiling face of the image appeared to have grown stiff.

"No more!" shouted the wizard wrathfully. "No more have I the patience to pursue the goal. My father and Raghav Singh joined hands and killed King Veersingh. Then Raghav deprived my father of his share of the kingdom and occupied the throne. His son Bhuvansingh rules the land now. My father died a broken-hearted man. And I have been practising tantra and trying to please

you for twelve years. Haven't I sat on corpses in the cremation ground and uttered your name a million times so far? It was the hundredth corpse that I used tonight to propitiate you. But where is the result? Answer me, O Bairavi! When do I win the throne?"



The wizard waited for the answer, his eyes burning with agony. But no word ensued from the stone lips of the image.

"You will not answer, is that so? Well then, I give up. Cursed be those hands of mine which could not avenge the death of a disappointed father," said the wizard and in the next moment he stepped forward and with his left hand snatched away the sword held by the image. Then, with a sudden stroke, he cut off his own right hand.

And immediately was heard a terrific laughter—hundred times louder than his own. He was taken aback.

"You fool! You think that you alone have a desire to be fulfilled, do you? Didn't you ever know that I, the spirit of this dark nether region, could also have a desire?"

The wizard goggled his red eyes in astonishment.

"But have I not done everything necessary to satisfy you?" stammered out the wizard.

"Everything?" The question was followed by another peal of laughter.

"Do you think that dead bodies are all that is necessary to satisfy me? You must sacri-

fice a living human being to me. You must then sit on that corpse and worship me. Only then shall I be propitiated," said Bairavi.

"Why one? I can sacrifice twenty living human beings to you!" answered the wizard.

"I am not interested in twenty. Bring me one man, but not just anyone. Hunt out the noblest, the bravest young man. Only then shall you achieve your goal," assured the deity of the dark world.

The wizard kept quiet and then sighed and said, "What a pity that I lost my right hand!"

"Join the severed hand to your arm and sprinkle on it the magic water which you will find at my feet. You will be whole again," said Bairavi.

The wizard shouted for his disciple. Mangal appeared

there in no time and was horrified to see his guru's condition.

"Do not faint. Remember whose disciple you are!" said the wizard in a stern voice.

"Yes, O guruji!" responded Mangal.

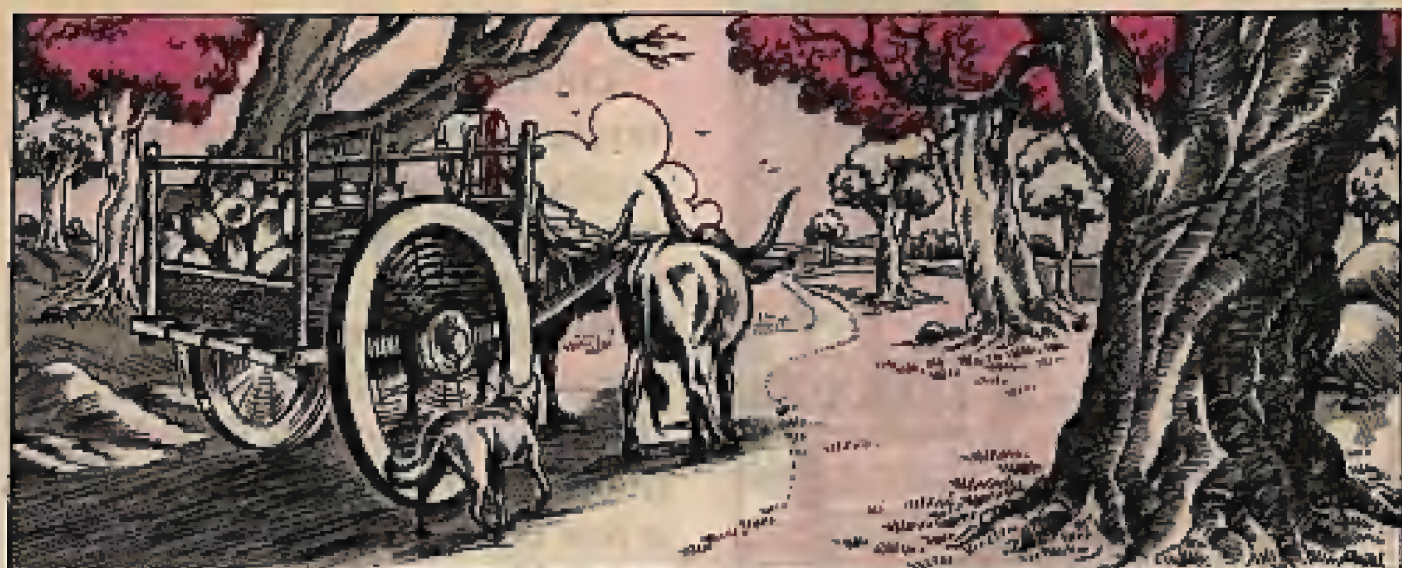
The wizard then instructed him to join his severed limb to his arm and sprinkle the water. Mangal did the needful. The wizard flexed the muscles of his arms and prostrated himself to his deity.

"Help me, O Spirit of the dark region. I go out into the wide world in search of the noblest and bravest young man!" said the wizard as he got up.

Thunder shook the hills. "Hail to Bairavi!" shouted the wizard. As he was going out, a wild laughter behind him surpassed even the sound of the thunder.

Contd.





LEGENDS AND PARABLES OF INDIA

EQUAL TO A THOUSAND

Ramdas was poor, but he worked hard. He had a small plot of land. Whatever was produced on it was just enough for him to make his both ends meet. But he ate and spent as little as possible and saved as much as he could. This he did for years.

With the money saved—which was not much—he bought coconuts from the people of his village and put them in a cart and carried them to the town. He sold them at some profit. After a few months he bought even more coconuts and hired two carts and gained a greater profit by selling them in the town. He repeated this several times and made a profit every time. But he spent not

a paisa from his gains for himself. He continued to wear tattered clothes and go without a pair of slippers. He never ate anything better than coarse rice.

Who would think anything but that he was a great miser? He alone knew that he was not. If he saved, it was because he cherished a sweet dream. That was to once feed a thousand worthy souls on the birthday of Krishna.

At last he knew that he had gathered enough money to fulfil his dream. As the birthday of Krishna was near he consulted the chief priest of the village on how to find a thousand worthy souls.

“What difficulty is there in



finding a thousand worthy souls? To begin with, I am one, my five sons and fifteen grandsons make twenty more. Other Brahmins of this village and the villages nearby can be counted to make up the rest," replied the priest.

"Fine. I will meet each one of them personally and request them to have food at my house on Krishna's birthday," said Ramdas.

Ramdas had several friends among the poor. They helped him to clear the ground in front of his house and erect a thatch. Brahmins known to be good hands at cooking were booked for the great day.

On the sacred day Ramdas's house wore a festive look. The cooks arrived in due time and began their work, assisted by the villagers.

But it so happened that a big party of guests descended on the local landlord a little before midday. The landlord sent for a few cooks. But they were not available.

"Sir! Ramdas is celebrating the birthday of Krishna with great pomp and show. He is going to feed a thousand Brahmins. All the cooks are engaged by him," a servant reported to the landlord.

"What did you say, poor Ramdas is feeding a thousand Brahmins? Are you drunk, fellow? You think feeding a thousand Brahmins—of all people Brahmins, mind you—is as easy a thing as feeding a thousand fish?" growled the landlord.

"I know, sir, that so far nobody but yourself and your heaven-gone forefathers had dared to feed a thousand Brahmins. But, I repeat sir, that is the feat Ramdas is keen to perform," said the servant.

The landlord stood fuming. In poor Ramdas he saw an adversary who challenged his

supremacy.

"What does Ramdas think of himself? A landlord?" he hurled the question at his servant angrily.

"I don't think he thinks of himself a landlord at the moment standing under a mere thatch. But, who knows, he might be thinking of becoming one!" replied the mischievous servant who knew that at times it pays to infuriate his master against some innocent fellow.

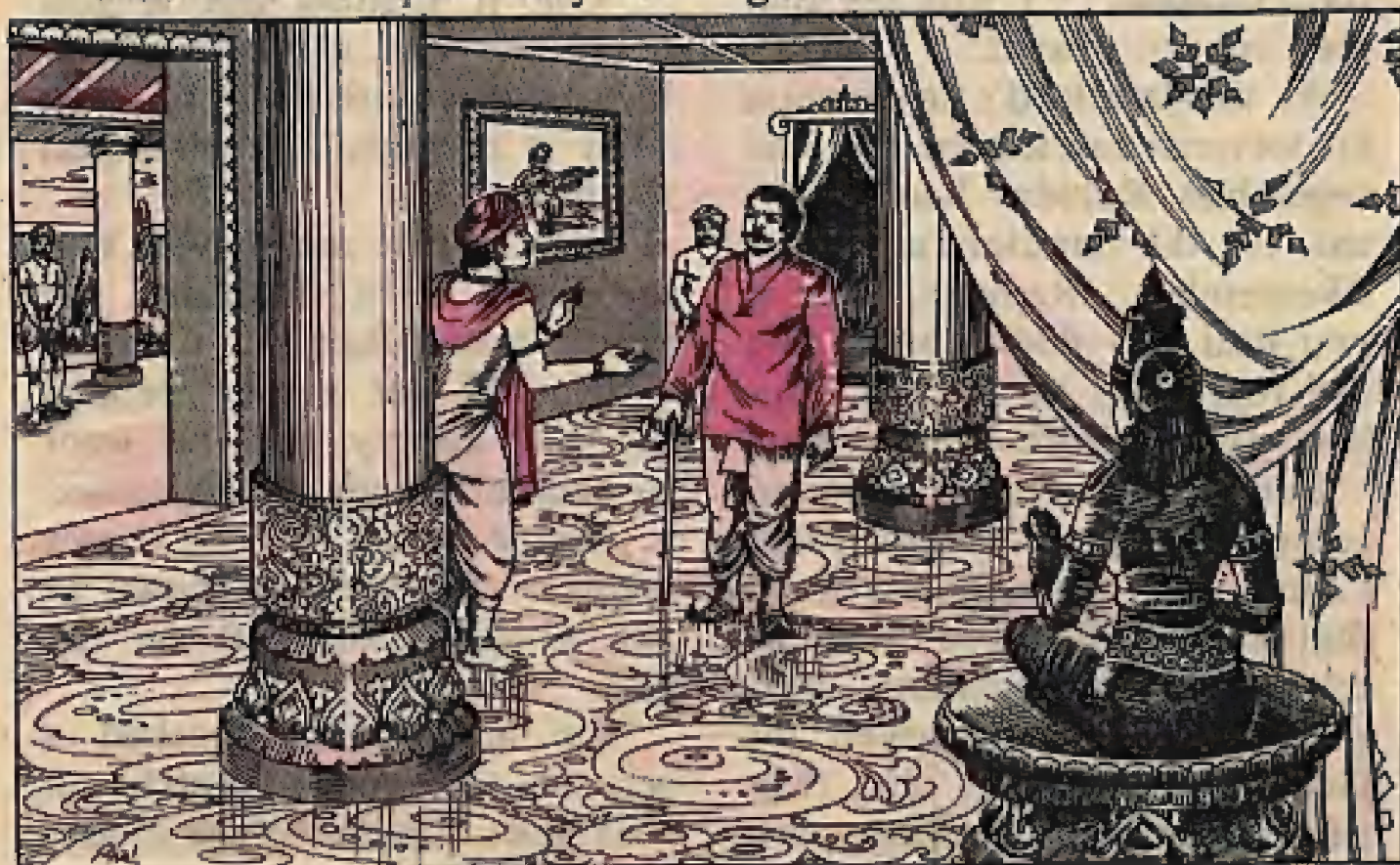
Soon the landlord's manager reached there and commented, "If anybody has the right to feed a thousand Brahmins, it is our noble landlord!"

This made it quite easy for

the landlord to come to a decision. "We too will observe the birthday of Krishna and feed a thousand Brahmins. Summon the cooks and ask the Brahmins to have their food here—not at Ramdas's," ordered the landlord.

The cooks Ramdas had engaged were obliged to rush to the landlord's house. Half a dozen messengers ran through the villages asking the Brahmins to dine at the landlord's and not at Ramdas's.

Ramdas met the landlord and appealed, "Sir, I have already boiled the rice and cut the vegetables for a thousand guests..."





"That is no problem," cut in the landlord. "I will see that they are not wasted."

At the landlord's instruction his servants carried the rice and vegetables Ramdas had collected to the landlord's house. "Remember, Ramdas, that if you feed any guest today, you will repent for the rest of your life," the landlord warned him.

Ramdas sat on his deserted veranda with a blank look. "Am I such a sinner, Krishna, that my long-cherished dream to celebrate your birthday must be shattered?" he asked his God in his heart. He then tried to get over his disappoint-

ment by his own reserve of humour. "Well, at least let me not starve myself on Krishna's birthday," he told himself and collected a handful of rice and pulse that lay scattered on his floor and cooked them.

He was about to eat when a little boy appeared on the veranda and said, "What! Were you not going to throw a feast? I let myself go hungry for the whole day so that I could relish what you offer!"

Ramdas brought the little food he had cooked and placed it before the boy on a banana leaf. As the boy began to eat, he told him the whole episode.

"Oh, it matters not if you could not feed a thousand fellows. You are feeding me. That is enough," commented the boy.

"You amuse me, boy! You are equal to a thousand, are you?" asked Ramdas.

"Yes, if not more," replied the boy calmly and he went to wash his hands. Ramdas had a hearty laugh at the boy's answer. He then sat down to eat whatever was left on the leaf.

The landlord had asked a servant to keep a watch on Ramdas's house, to see if any-

body dared to respond to his invitation. The landlord happened to pass by Ramdas's house when the servant informed him that Ramdas had entertained at least one guest.

The furious landlord marched towards Ramdas's house, followed by his companions. Ramdas was relishing each morsel of the food left by his guest. Never had he eaten anything so delicious.

"Look at me, Ramdas!" shouted the landlord. But Ramdas was too engrossed in eating to lift up his head.

"Snatch and throw away the leaf!" the landlord ordered one of his servants.

The leaf was snatched away. But Ramdas continued to eat, for there was another leaf before him.

That too was snatched away.

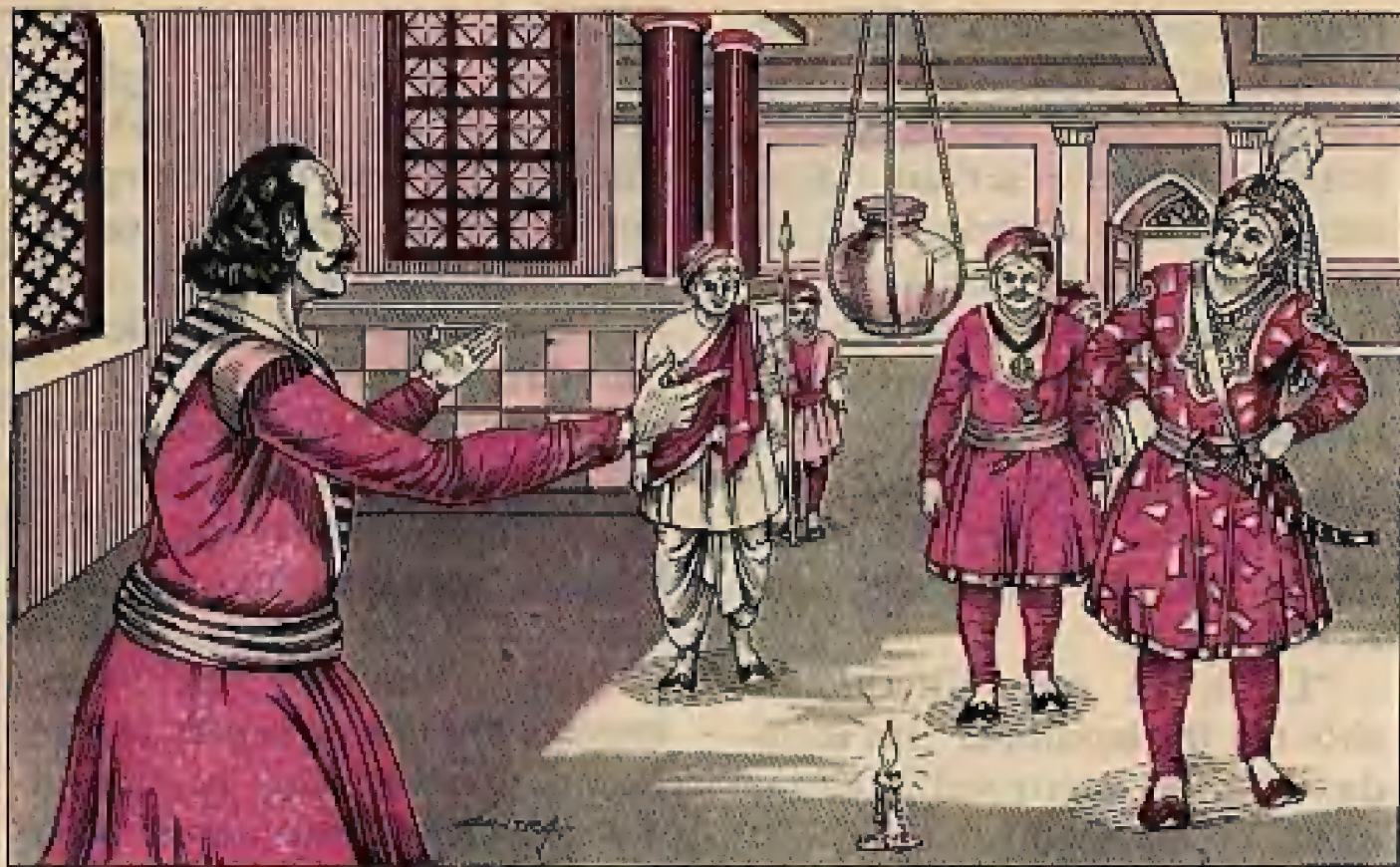
But there was yet another. The landlord, angry and aghast, kept on shouting and shrieking. The servant kept on picking up and throwing away the leaves. But there was always another leaf with some food on it before Ramdas!

More and more people gathered behind the landlord to see the strange occurrence. The landlord was gesticulating like a madman. The servants looked terrified. But they had to remove a thousand leaves before Ramdas raised his head and saw the crowd and asked what the matter was.

When told by the people about the miracle, Ramdas only smiled and said, "He was right, he was equal to a thousand, if not more!"

But the landlord really went insane.





The World of Magic

Cooking—The Magic Way

“Why is the jester absent from the court today?” asked the king looking at an officer. The king was extremely fond of his jester, Gopal.

The officer rushed to Gopal's house which was not far. He saw Gopal all right, but he was taken aback at what Gopal was doing. He watched him for a while without a word although Gopal spoke to him normally and informed him that he will proceed to the court soon.

The officer returned soon and fumbled out, “My lord, you won't believe me if I tell you what Gopal is doing. He has hung a pot filled with water and rice close to the beam of his roof. He has lighted a fire on the floor. He says that as soon as the rice is ready, he will have his lunch and come here!”

The king sat stunned for a minute. “I am afraid, our poor Gopal has grown mad. I must go and see him.”

The king marched to Gopal's house.

"My lord! I feel honoured at your visit. But why did you take the trouble?" asked Gopal, feigning innocence.

"Well, you speak like a sane man. But how do you dream that your rice will boil while the pot hung at the roof and the fire burned on the ground?" demanded the king.

"It is possible, my lord. tomorrow I will demonstrate this fashion of cooking in the court itself."

"I will give you a hundred gold mohurs if you succeed in demonstrating your art," announced the king as he left.

Gopal arrived in the court, the next day, with an earthen pot and a handful of rice. The pot hung suspended from the

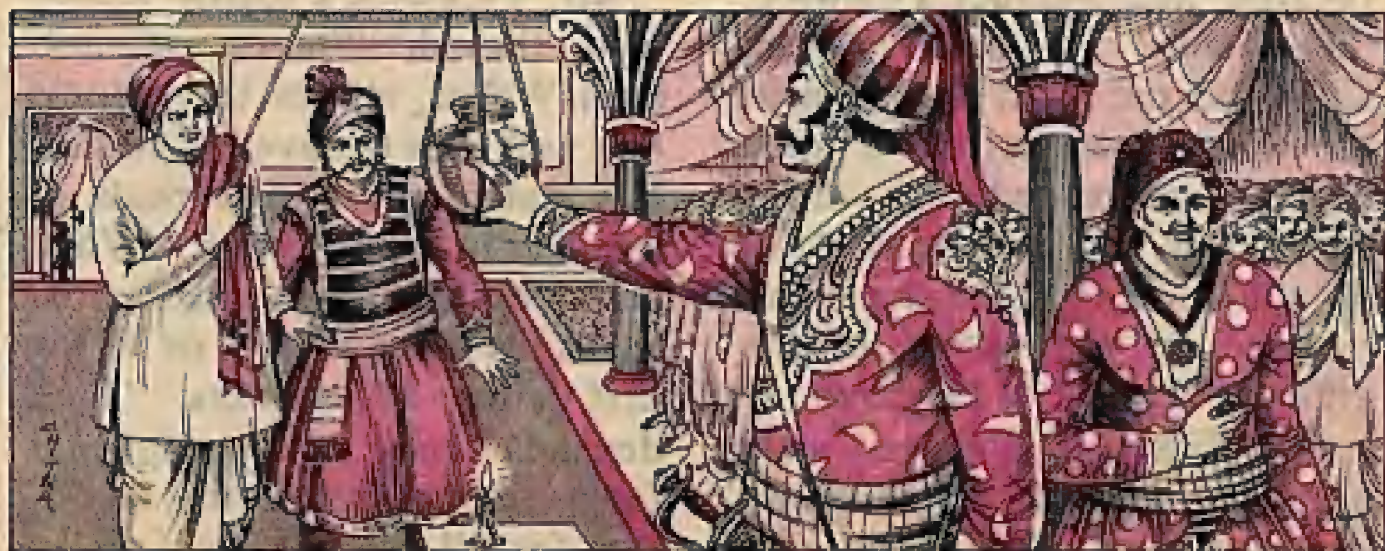
beam, after Gopal put the rice and poured water into it. He then lit a candle and placed it on a stool under it.

"Examine whether the rice is boiling or not," Gopal asked a courtier. Pressing his ear on the pot, the courtier exclaimed, "Indeed, I can hear the sound of the rice boiling!"

The king touched the pot and found it quite hot. At once he handed over a hundred gold mohurs to the jester.

That is all the jester wanted. What he had put into the pot was not all rice. Mixed with the rice were grains of limestone. Gopal had shaped them to look like rice! With water poured on them, they had soon begun to explode. That produced the sound of rice boiling, and they generated heat too.

Mr. A. C. Sorcer, Magician





PICKWICK

"Heads, heads...! five children—mother—tall lady, eating sandwiches—forgot the arch—crash—knock—children look round—mother's head off—sandwich in her hand—no mouth to put it in—head of a family off—shocking, shocking!"

This is Mr. Alfred Jingle babbling in the *Pickwick Papers* in a telegraphic style. He is one of a number of peculiar characters in the book. Although the book does not have a strong plot, it is full of amusing observations on men and matters. That is natural, because Mr. Samuel Pickwick, the founder of the Pickwick Club and the main character in the story, goes out on a journey, accompanied by three friends, to make a report to his club about the nature and manners of the people of the different regions of England.

Mr. Pickwick, however, runs into an unexpected difficulty which ultimately makes him dis-

solve the club. His widowed landlady, Mrs. Bardell, fancies that he loves her and would marry her. Her conduct becomes unbearable and Mr. Pickwick leaves London for a while. But, upon his return, he is sued for breach of promise by Mrs. Bardell's lawyers. As a proof of his love for her, she produces in the court a letter which says, "Chops and tomato sauce"! Although poor Mr. Pickwick insists that he never meant anything but chops and tomato sauce, Mrs. Bardell's lawyers prove that it was a love letter.

Mr. Pickwick's highly intelligent, though illiterate, servant, Sam Weller, climbs the witness box and tries to save his master. His statements arouse peals of laughter in the audience. When asked by the judge whether he spells his name with V or W for first letter, he answers, "That depends upon the taste and fancy of the speller, my lord!" But for all his wit, he fails to

PAPERS



convince the judge that his master was innocent. Mr. Pickwick is pronounced guilty. He must pay £ 750 as damage to the lady.

But Mr. Pickwick is deeply depressed at the injustice done to him. He refuses to pay the damage. Consequently he is thrown into jail. And one day, whom should he meet in the jail but Mrs. Bardell and her son! She had an understanding with her lawyers that they will be paid out of the money she received from Mr. Pickwick. But as Mr. Pickwick did not pay, the lawyers brought a suit against her and she was jailed.

The kind-hearted Mr. Pickwick paid her lawyers and secured her and her son's release.

Mr. Pickwick is in great demand by his friends outside. He had to pay up the so called damage after all and come out of the prison to help solve the problems faced by his friends.

The good Mr. Pickwick at last retires to a village and passes his time in peace.

The *Pickwick Papers* (1837), the first of the famous novels of Charles Dickens (1812-1870) is avidly read even today.

DETECTING A LIE

A certain landlord once gave such a brutal thrashing to one of his servants that the latter died. Far from being repentant, the landlord desired to turn the incident to his own advantage. He had an enemy in Govind, a young man who often opposed his tyranny. The landlord put the blame for his servant's death squarely on Govind's head. He bribed a priest who would declare having seen Govind beating the servant to death. He hoped that the local judge would easily be led to believe the priest who looked innocent and religious.

"On Tuesday evening I was going to the neighbouring village to negotiate for my daughter's marriage when I saw Govind beat the servant on the road," the priest told the judge.

"Being a priest, you could not have gone out on Tuesday evening on such an auspicious mission! The combination of planets indicated a bad time then!" observed the judge, although he had no idea about the planetary situation on Tuesday evening.

That was enough. The priest broke down and confessed to being bribed.





The Brass that Proved Gold

Khandu, the wealthy shopkeeper of Shivpur sat on his veranda and watched the passers-by. Shivpur was a prosperous village and many sorts of people visited it.

A beggar who was almost blind, approached Khandu and pleaded for alms. Suddenly Khandu's attention went over to the bowl the beggar was holding. The bowl had four blobs at its bottom which glittered like gold.

Khandu offered the beggar a paisa and asked him endearingly, "Your bowl is very old. It may break any time. If you leave it here, I can give you a new one."

"Thank you, sir. But this is

very precious to me," replied the beggar.

Khandu was left in no doubt about the bowl being made of gold. It so happened that soon his eyes fell on Bhikham, a notorious thief, who was passing that way. He called him and whispered to him, "Bhikham! I want you to find out where this beggar lives."

"May I know why?" queried Bhikham.

"Well, there is nothing to hide from you. The bowl he carries seems to be made of gold—at least the blobs at its bottom. Though he is almost blind, he is aware of its value."

Lowering his voice further, Khandu said again, "Bhikham,

I need your help in getting hold of the bowl. But, please remember, it is I who have discovered it, not you. You should claim no share of it. I will pay you for your service, anyway."

"Very well," Bhikham agreed to help Khandu in fulfilling his evil design and followed the beggar.

"Brother, where do you live?" he asked when he caught up with the beggar.

"I have no house to live. I wander about in day-time and relax in the shade of somebody's house. At night I sleep under the banian tree at the centre of the cremation ground," replied

the beggar.

After a little more useless talk with the beggar Bhikham returned to Khandu and reported his finding to him.

It was late in the afternoon. Khandu did not allow Bhikham to go away. He fed the thief sumptuously and then, when it was night, went out with him in search of the beggar.

They could locate the beggar easily. He lay asleep under the banian tree at the centre of the cremation ground. Bhikham went near him stealthily and returned with the bowl.

"Let me see it," said Khandu eagerly.



"Here it is," said Bhikham and instead of handing the bowl over to him, he brought it down on his head with all his strength.

What Bhikham wanted was to snatch away Khandu's purse which contained his day's sales-proceed from his shop, apart from possessing the gold bowl. As Khandu swooned away and fell down, Bhikham relieved him of the purse all right, but the bowl broke into two pieces and slipped off his hand. From a nearby corner was heard some voices. Bhikham ran away without picking up the broken bowl.

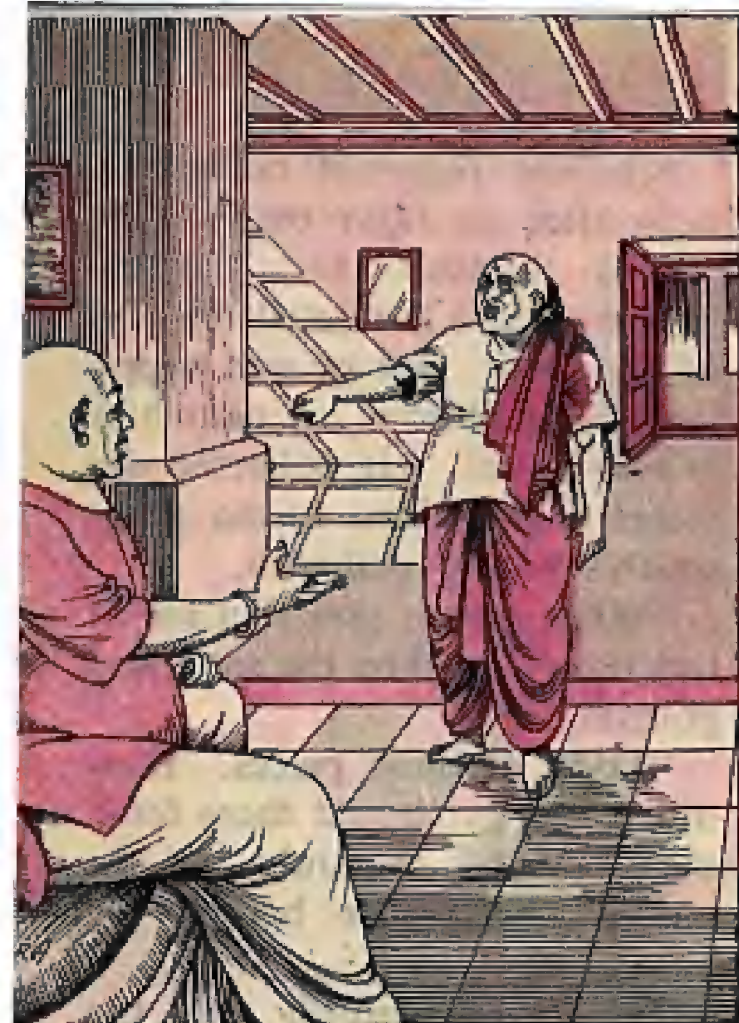
Khandu regained consciousness after an hour or so. He cursed himself for trusting Bhikham and lamented the loss of his purse. But he was happy that the gold bowl lay near him in two pieces. He collected the pieces and walked to the goldsmith's house forthwith.

"What makes you visit me at this hour?" asked the surprised goldsmith.

"Look at these pieces. How much money should these fetch me?" asked Khandu as he placed the pieces before the goldsmith.

To the goldsmith too the pieces looked like gold. He rea-





was ordinary brass.

"I will see Khandu in the morning!" he murmured and kept the pieces on a rack.

It so happened that two thieves who followed Khandu and saw a part of the transaction peeping through a window, understood that something valuable had changed hands. They observed carefully where the goldsmith kept the pieces. One of them sneaked in as soon as the goldsmith fell asleep and escaped with them.

The goldsmith confronted Khandu in the morning. "Return me my hundred rupees, you rogue!" he shouted.

Khandu, naturally, did not wish people to know that he had stolen a beggar's bowl. He said apologetically, "Do not fret and shout, my brother, I will return the money as soon as you return me my property!"

"I have thrown the rubbish you gave me into the drain!" said the goldsmith.

"In that case, brother, you can also take it that I have thrown away the rubbish you gave me into the drain!" replied Khandu calmly.

The goldsmith felt undone. Fuming and sweating, he walked out.

lised that the shop-keeper would not visit him at that hour unless he had, in a dubious way, come to lay his hands on something valuable.

The goldsmith pretended to examine the pieces carefully and then said, "This is alloyed gold, not pure. I can buy these for a hundred rupees."

It was not a bad offer so far as Khandu was concerned. He accepted the amount and left hurriedly.

The goldsmith began examining the pieces carefully after Khandu left. He was disappointed to find that the metal contained not an iota of gold. It

The two thieves were going in another direction. It was by chance that from one's bag one piece of the bowl fell down. The goldsmith recognised it immediately and ran to take hold of the fellow, shouting, "Thieves! Thieves!"

The thieves tried to escape, but some sepoys who were nearby pursued and captured them. They were led to the king's court.

Asked by the king, the thieves confessed to their having stolen the broken bowl from the goldsmith's house. The goldsmith narrated how he had been deceived by Khandu. Summoned to the court, Khandu confessed to his having stolen it from the beggar. He also narrated how Bhikham had relieved him of his purse.

Bhikham was absconding.

But before long he was arrested. The beggar, called to the court, was asked, "Why did you value this bowl so much?"

"My lord, a hermit had kindly given it to me. He had said that I should preserve it, for, although it was made of brass, it might one day prove as valuable as gold," replied the beggar.

The king asked the goldsmith, "How much would the bowl cost had it been made of gold?"

"Five thousand rupees, my lord," replied the goldsmith.

"Good. Let Khandu pay four thousand and Bhikam one thousand. The five thousand should be kept in the royal treasury. The beggar should be given a monthly allowance out of it," was the king's order.

"The mendicant's words proved true!" exclaimed the beggar in joy.



THE DANGEROUS CAVE

This happened long ago, in Avanti.

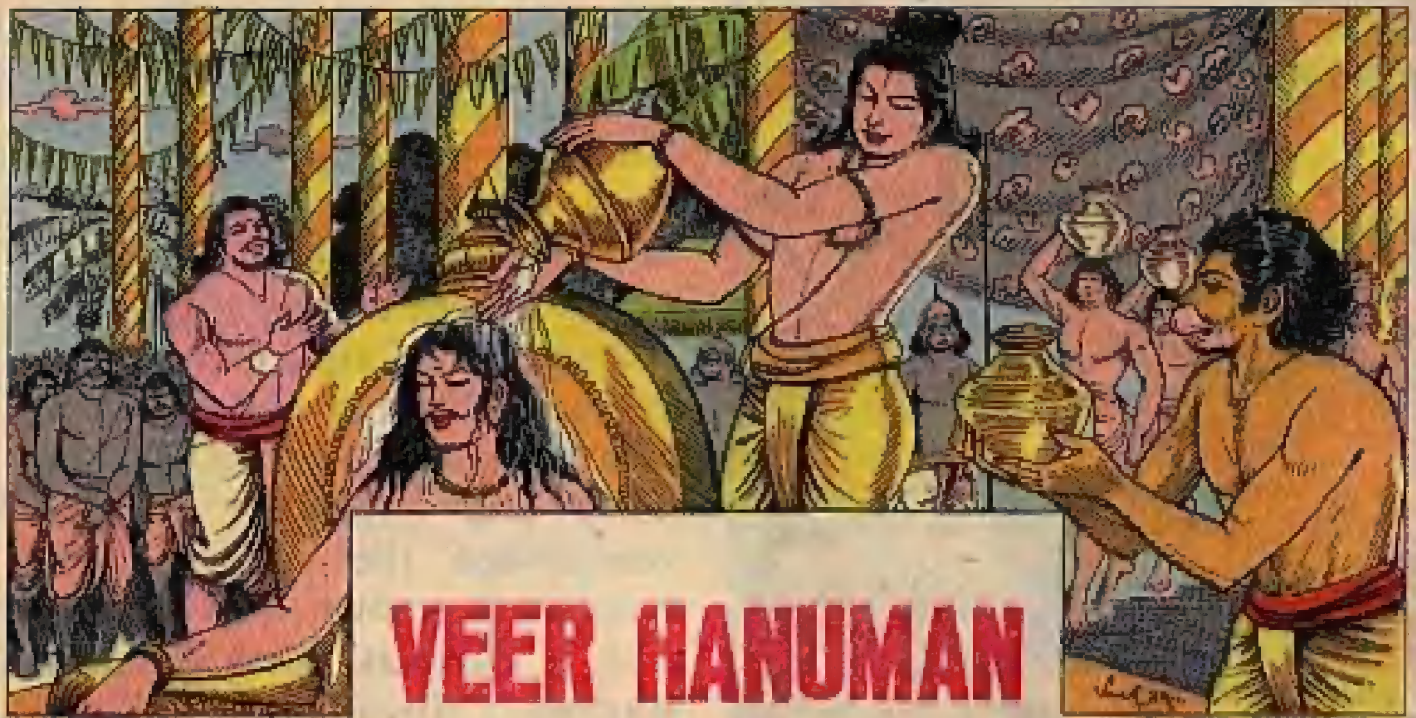
When it was announced that the king looked forward to find a suitable bridegroom for his daughter, three princes of nearby kingdoms presented themselves as candidates.

"Welcome," said the king to the princes. He then led them into a dark house where a dozen or so dogs were in chains.

"To tell you frankly, these were all princes who sought my daughter's hand. Defeated in a test, they are changed into dogs. All you have to do is to enter a certain cave," said the king.

One of the three princes went back immediately. The remaining two were led to a cave. From inside was heard the growl of a dog. The second one retreated. The third prince, however entered the cave. Inside stood the princess, with a garland in her hand!





Gods and gundharvas who had assembled to witness the great battle departed while singing the glory of Rama and praising the devotion of the Vanaras.

Rama expressed his deep gratitude to Indra who had sent his chariot and deputed his charioteer, Matali, to help Rama fight better. Matali then left for his heavenly abode, flying his chariot.

Rama then retired into his camp for a while and instructed Lakshmana and Sugriva to arrange for the coronation of Vibhishana without any delay.

All became active for carrying out the instruction. The Vanaras brought water from the sea in gold vessels. Lakshmana made Vibhishana sit on the throne and poured the sacred

water on his head keeping with the ritual. Vibhishana's ministers and the crowd of demons gave out shouts of joy.

Vibhishana assured his subjects that the country will enjoy a sound and sensible rule. He advised them to live a dutiful and fearless life.

The demon chieftains showered a number of gifts on Vibhishana. Vibhishana, in his turn, carried some most precious presents to Rama. Although Rama was in no mood to feel glad with gifts, he had to accept them lest Vibhishana should feel offended.

Looking at Hanuman who stood with dedication and devotion for him writ large on his face, Rama said, "O my brave lieutenant, you may now enter



the fort with the permission of King Vibhishana. Meeting Sita, you may now convey the news of our victory to her. Tell her that Ravana has lost his life at my hands and that Vibhishana, our friend, is now the King of Lanka. I am safe with Lakshmana and Sugriva."

Hanuman entered the fort joyfully. Vast was the area covered by the fortification. As Hanuman marched on in proud strides, the demons bowed to him respectfully. Before long he reached the rear part of the fort where, in the Asoca garden, dwelt the captive Sita.

Hanuman stood before her, his hands folded. The unmind-

ful Sita did not recognise him immediately. But when she did, her face beamed with a heavenly smile. That pleased Hanuman and he spoke: "O mother, kindly accept my greetings. The victorious Ramachandra is hale and healthy and is in the pleasant company of Lakshmana and Sugriva. He has vanquished the enemy. His mission is crowned with success. He has himself killed Ravana, Invaluable was the help rendered by Vibhishana, great was the courage shown by Lakshmana and so was the sincerity of the Vanaras. It is my splendid good luck that I was asked by Ramachandra to carry this happy tidings to you. Mother! Kindly rejoice with us. Ramachandra said that he is immensely lucky that you, his faithful and brave consort, have survived the calamity. O mother! Rama's lieutenant and the present ruler of Lanka, Vibhishana, will be soon here to greet you."

Sita, thrilled at the news, stood up. But she looked sad again the very next moment.

"Why are you silent and gloomy, O mother?" queried Hanuman.

"O gentle Hanuman! I cannot

express how delighted I am at the news you have brought. I feel sad because if I would like to reward you, it would be hard to find a prize precious enough to befit the occasion," said Sita.

Answered Hanuman, "Mother! Your kind words are my greatest reward. I had the opportunity to behold Ramachandra after he emerged victorious. What experience could be more elevating?"

Sita praised Hanuman affectionately. Suddenly Hanuman cast a stern look on the demonesses who guarded Sita. He said in anger, "Mother! If you permit me, I would very much like to crush these creatures to death. They must have harassed you so much!"

But said Sita, "Child! They were slaves of Ravana. They had no choice. They had to obey their master's order. Hence you should not get angry with them. It was in my destiny that I should suffer. I have no complaint against these demonesses, even if some of them might have been unkind to me."

"You are indeed worthy of Ramachandra in every way. I will abide by your wish and

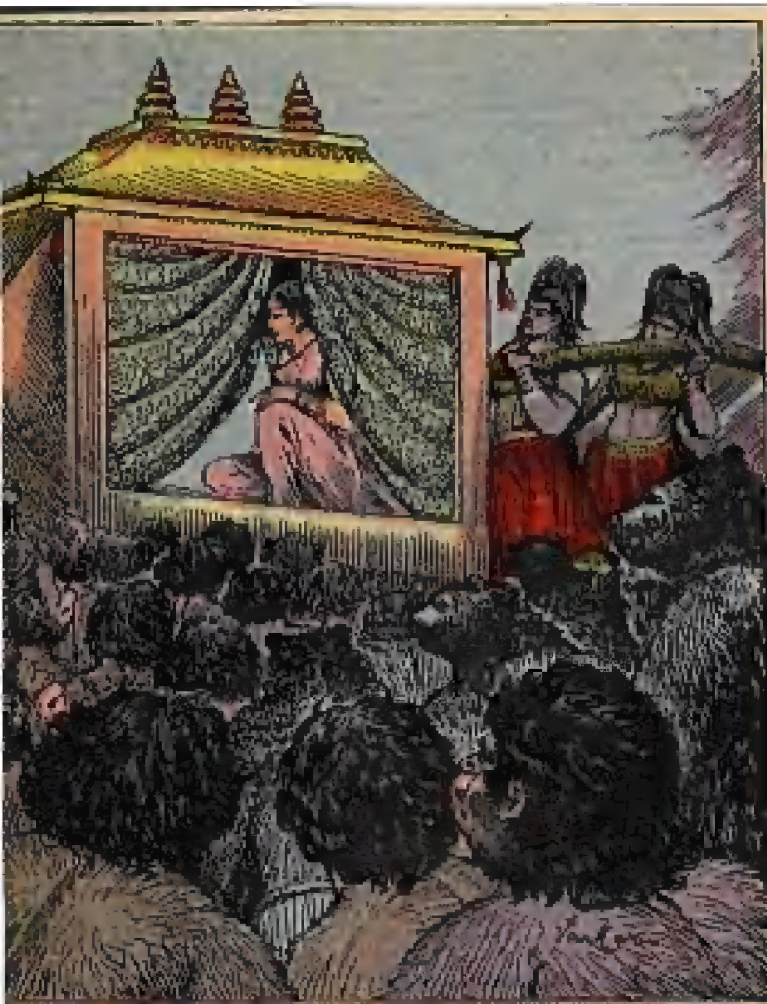


refrain from harming your tormentors. Now, mother, what is your message for Ramachandra?" asked Hanuman.

"I am eager to see him," said Sita.

Hanuman hurried back to Rama and reported, "I have met her for whom we crossed the sea and fought the demons. I am extremely glad that she recognised me. Our victory delights her. She is most eager to meet you, O master!"

Rama's eyes were moistened. He sat silent, lost in a dilemma. Sita was Ravana's prisoner for a long time. What will the world say if he accepts her without any qualm? And how



can he turn away from her since she was innocent?

After a while Rama told Vibhishana, "You may direct the palace maids to help Sita get ready to come here."

Vibhishana at once departed into the palace and directed the maids to bathe Sita and clothe and bedeck her with the finest clothes and ornaments available.

But Sita sent word to Vibhishana, saying that she would like to meet Rama even in the condition she was. However, she conceded to Vibhishana's wish at his repeated request and let the maids prepare her for the journey.

After the maids had done their work, the demon-bearers carried Sita in a gold palanquin to Rama's camp, following Vibhishana.

"O Rama, Sita Devi has arrived!" announced Vibhishana.

Rama sat, unmindful of Vibhishana's words. Upon Vibhishana repeating them, he raised his head and asked him to bring Sita to his presence.

Vibhishana ordered his personal guards to clear the place of Vanaras. But Rama intervened and said, "Vibhishana! Are these soldiers not our friends who did everything possible for the rescue of Sita? Why should they be deprived of seeing Sita?"

Vibhishana withdrew his order.

But Lakshmana and Sugriva found it quite awkward that Rama should meet Sita amidst a crowd. They did not also understand why Rama should look so grave.

Sita appeared before Rama, shyly, following Vibhishana. At Rama's sight, she was overwhelmed with joy. But she could not speak more than a word addressing him, for the crowd made her shrink.

But Rama said nothing to

welcome her. "Sita!" he uttered in a melancholover tone. "We fought a fierce battle in order to rescue you. We have avenged the humiliation the enemy had wrought on us. After Hanuman had traced you through his daring journey to this land, we had to bridge the sea and lead our army and give battle to the demons. With the devoted help rendered by Lakshmana, Sugriva, Vibhishana and all the rest, I have crushed the proud demon-tyrant."

Sita expected Rama to say some words of consolation for all her suffering. But he said nothing of the sort. This filled her heart with sorrow. She stood stupefied.

Rama said again, "I have done whatever was necessary to redeem our dignity. You are now free. But I do not know

how I can accept you again. You were a prisoner of the demon-king, after all. How can I prove to the people that you continued to remain pure? I feel helpless. I am a prince hailing from the illustrious solar dynasty. It is my duty to enhance the glory of the dynasty, not to cloud it by any questionable conduct. However, you can live with either Lakshmana or Bharata. They will no doubt show the respect due to you. Sugriva and Vibhishana too are trustworthy friends. You may even live with any of them if you so prefer. I have nothing more to say!"

Sita had come out of her gloomy captive days with the hope of finding happiness and peace. Rama's words fell on her with the ferocity of a hundred thunders. She stood silent shedding tears.

Contd.





The Value of Praise

Vasanta Roy, the ambitious king of Karpurvan, nursed a great desire; that was to be praised by all his subjects. The more he read or heard about the great kings of the past whose glory was sung by the posterity, the more eager he grew to be counted as one among them. He was never reluctant to spend for the welfare of his people or in charity to the poor.

Once in a while he donned a disguise and wandered among his people and heard what they said about him and his administration. The people in general spoke well of him and that pleased him very much.

But one day he had had an unexpected encounter. A villager named Shivnath told him, "What is there so great about our king? I don't think he has

done anything to deserve our praise!"

The disguised king was quite surprised. He concluded that there must be some special problem concerning the people of that particular village which he had not solved. That made them unhappy. On enquiry he learnt that there was dirth of water in the village. He discussed the problem with experts and dug a canal which greatly benefited the village.

A year later the disguised king met Shivnath again. He certainly expected Shivnath to praise him. But Shivnath remarked, "Digging a canal does not make a king great. We have so many problems. How much does the king care for them?"

The king made further enquiries and learnt that there was no road connecting the village

with the town. Villagers who earned their living by selling their produce in the town suffered much during the monsoon. The king lost no time in constructing a road.

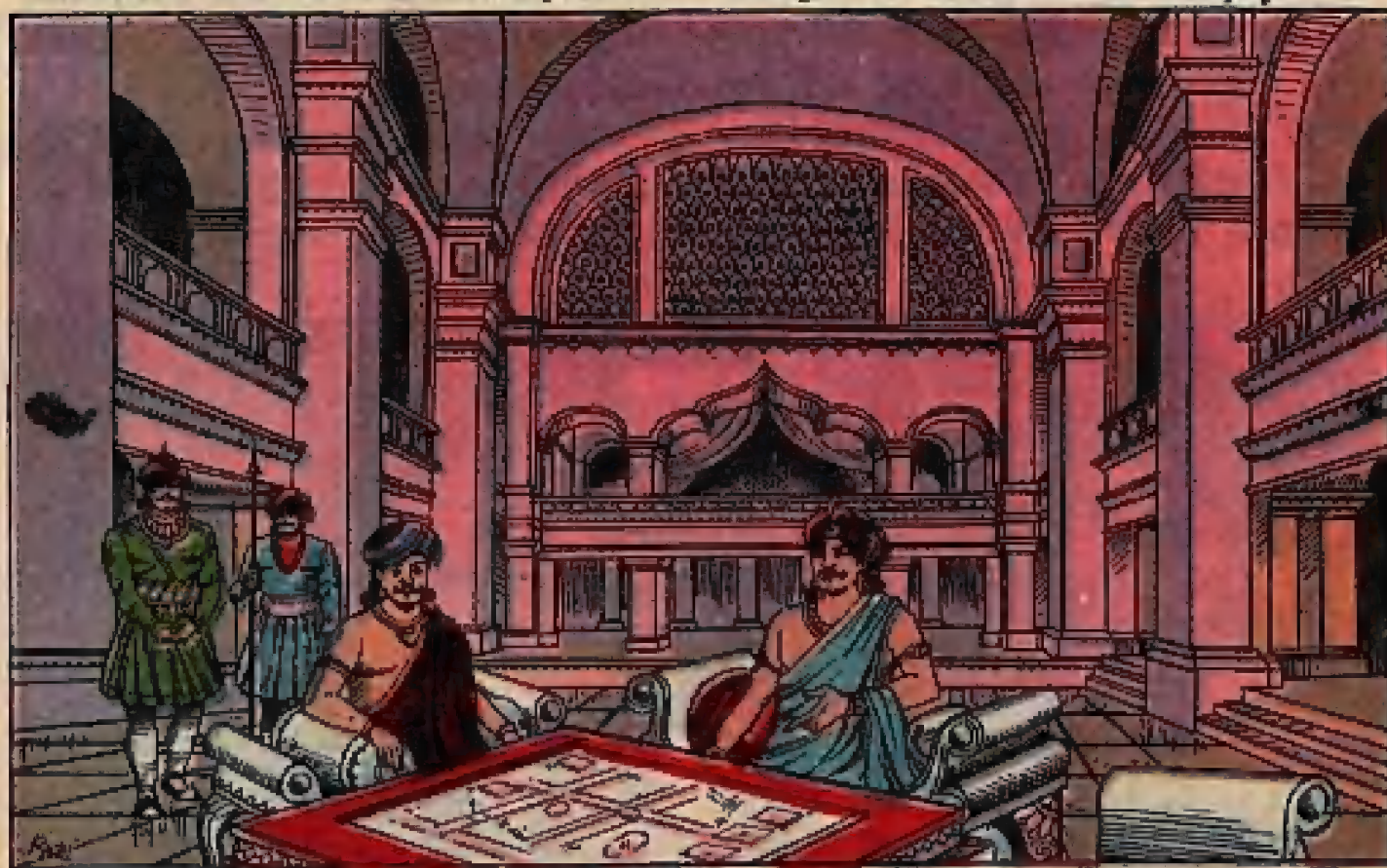
Even then no praise for the king was forthcoming from Shivnath. The king established a dispensary and a school in the village in the course of another year. All the villagers spoke high of the king, but not Shivnath.

The disguised king asked Shivnath, "Well, I fail to understand why you have no kind word for the king when all others in the village praise him! What is the matter with you?"

"Those who are benefited by the king naturally sing his praise. Why should I?" replied Shivnath.

"But is it not surprising that you alone do not benefit from the king's actions?" queried the king.

"Those who have lands benefit by the canal; those who have some reason or the other to go to the town benefit by the road. I have none. Those who have kids to study benefit from the school. My sons are grown up. Those who are diseased are happy to have the dispensary. I am not. Will you please tell me why should I praise the king?" was Shivnath's reply.



Instead of thinking about the problems of the village, the king now tried to find out the personal problems that beset Shivnath. He soon learnt that Shivnath quarrelled with his sons and the sons were united against him. As there was no peace at home, Shivnath passed his time here and there and went without food on days.

The king built a house for Shivnath and so arranged that he did not have to go without food. On meeting the disguised king next, Shivnath was full of his praise!

A few days passed. While passing through another village the disguised king met another of his critics named Haricharan. No more did the king try to find out what was the problem of Haricharan's village. He simply found out what ailed


Haricharan himself and gave him relief. Haricharan grew a great admirer of the king.

By now the king had realised that there were some people who were never happy with any good work unless they were directly benefited by the work. They praised the king only when their interest was served. They remained blind to the great welfare works which benefited the whole community.

As the king realised this, his fascination for praise was gone. No more was he eager to satisfy individuals for the sake of being praised by them. He devoted his resources and time for the general welfare of his subjects, no matter what a few people said about him.

As a result he was praised by all, although he had no need of such praise any more!





*New Tales of King Vikram,
and the Vampire*

THE STRANGE SECRET

King Vikram braved the dark and stormy night and returned to the haunted tree in the cremation ground. He climbed it fearlessly and brought down the hanging corpse and began walking with the corpse on his shoulder. Jackals howled and from time to time was heard the eerie laughter of spirits.

The vampire that possessed the corpse suddenly observed, "O King, you certainly hope to gain some unusual power at the end of your labours. If you get hold of any such power, I hope, you won't pass it on to an undeserving fellow as Viswavarma did with the power he had mastered. Well, let me narrate to you the story of Viswavarma. That might make your arduous task a bit light."

Continued the vampire: In days gone by there was a young man, Viswavarma, who was deeply interested in things



occult. While roaming about in the Himalayas he met a yogi who possessed strange supernatural powers. Viswavarma managed to please him. He taught the young man a certain secret whereby one could double oneself and move about as two beings.

"My boy! You must not impart this secret to anybody unless you are sure that your action will be a direct service to the people," said the yogi. Viswavarma took an oath never to do otherwise.

Viswavarma wandered from kingdom to kingdom, showing his strange feat in the royal

courts, thereby earning both fame and wealth. While he was in the capital of Kalinga, the king told him, "I crave your indulgence. Kindly pass on your secret to me. I have dedicated myself to the service of the people. I roam about among them and watch their condition. If I can duplicate myself, I can do my work much better, for, vast is my kingdom."

Viswavarma was in a fix. He knew that the king served his people most sincerely. But he was not absolutely sure if his teaching the king to duplicate himself shall amount to a direct service to the people.

"My lord, kindly allow me to reflect on your request. If I deem it fit to impart the secret to you, I will return to you within six months," said Viswavarma.

Viswavarma next arrived in a neighbouring kingdom. His feat was hailed as the most marvellous wonder the people had ever known. In the evening, the princess sent word requesting a private audience with him. When they met, she said, "O great performer, be pleased to listen to my problem. Fascinated by my beauty, the princes of two neighbouring lands are

demanding my hand in marriage. Both are far more powerful than my father. The day my father consents to oblige one, the other one will launch an attack on our kingdom. O yogi, the solution is in your hand. Teach me the science of becoming two. Both the princes can be satisfied then."

"Well, my daughter, if I think it right to impart the science to you, I will return here three months later," said Viswavarma and he went away.

Viswavarma caused equal surprise in the court of the King of Kashmir. After the demonstration, the royal physician invited him to his house and said, "Sir, I have to see a large number of patients from the king's family as well from the families of the nobility. It would be so much convenient for me to give them proper attention if I could duplicate myself! Will you please teach me the process?"

Viswavarma replied that he will let him know his decision in three months.

Thereafter he visited a kingdom the people of which were harassed by a notorious bandit, Durdanda by name. Viswavarma showed his feat in the



king's court, in the presence of a large crowd and received thunderous applause.

At night he was woken up by a ferocious-looking fellow. "I am Durdanda, the bandit. I was in the crowd when you showed your miracle. Now, be quick, pass me on the secret. If you don't, I will go away, but only after killing you."

Viswavarma reflected on the situation for a moment and asked, "But, tell me, Durdanda, how are you going to benefit from this?" asked Viswavarma.

"I have a great desire to plunder the royal treasury. My job will be easier if I were two!"



replied the bandit.

"I will teach you the necessary hymn, but on condition that you will give me a fifth of what you get. And you should also remember that one who practises this miracle must not ever utter a lie. If he lies, the hymn won't work," warned Viswavarma.

The bandit agreed to pay one-fifth of his loot to Viswavarma. But he brooded for some time on the condition that he must always speak truth. At last he brightened up and said, "All right. I will plunder the treasury tomorrow at night. I can afford to avoid uttering lies

till then. I don't care if the hymn ceases to be effective thereafter."

Viswavarma taught the hymn to the bandit. The bandit tried it on himself and was satisfied that it worked. He offered an extremely precious piece of diamond to Viswavarma, but the latter refused to accept it.

In the morning Viswavarma met the king privately and told him about the bandit's plan and left the kingdom.

The vampire paused and then assumed a grave voice and asked, "O King, when Viswavarma had refused to teach the hymn to the King of Kalinga whose only interest lay in serving the people, how did he agree to teach it to the bandit? Was it for fear of being killed or due to greed for a share in the loot? Why did he refuse the diamond? And why did he go away without waiting for his share? I warn you, O King, if you can answer my questions, but choose to keep mum, your head would roll off your neck!"

Answered the king: "Viswavarma was convinced that if by teaching the hymn to the bandit he could help capture him, that would be the most direct service



done to the people. He might have been afraid of danger to his life, but we cannot say that he let the bandit know the hymn out of fear, for, we see a greater motive at work. By demanding a share in the loot he inspired faith in the bandit. By telling him that he cannot utter lies, he made the bandit take a decision to plunder the treasury soon and he learnt the exact date too. He did not accept the diamond because it would

have been immoral to receive a reward from a fellow whom he was going to deceive for the sake of a greater cause. He left the kingdom after revealing the bandit's plan to the king, because he wanted the king to capture Durdanda and he had nothing more to do with the affair."

No sooner had King Vikram finished answering than the vampire, along with the corpse, gave him the slip!



Harish: You think I am a perfect idiot, do you?

Narayan: Never. Who can be perfect in this world ?

An Appointment with the Bandit!

The city of Ujjain once became the haunt of a notorious bandit named Mansingh. The king tried his best to catch him, but failed. The king announced that whoever can pass on any information that would lead to the capture of the bandit would receive a reward of a thousand gold mohurs. But days passed and the reward remained unclaimed.

One night Mansingh climbed the building of a merchant in order to burgle a room in the upper storey which contained the merchant's treasures. Although he did so quite stealthily, a servant of the household chanced to notice him. He was soon chased. He made a daring leap onto a mango tree from the balcony. From there he jumped onto the roof of a neighbouring house. Nothing more of him could be seen through the darkness. It was concluded by the people that he had given them the slip.

But instead of reaching the roof, Mansingh in fact had landed on the courtyard of the house that belonged to a physician named Ram Shastri.

Ram Shastri and his wife stood stupefied at the sudden appearance of the bandit in the very midst of their house. However, the bandit spoke to them with great respect and said that he had broken one of his ankles. He implored the physician to treat him for his injury and promised a handsome fee.

The physician, under the pretext of fetching the necessary medicine, came out of the courtyard and whispered to his wife, "Keep an eye on the fellow who, I am sure, is none other than the infamous Mansingh. I will return with the king's guards soon. A thousand gold mohurs should be ours before long!"

The physician's wife stood guard on the injured bandit. All on sudden the bandit brandished a dagger and growled, "Speak out the truth, woman! Hasn't your husband gone out to call the police?"

The physician's wife, mortally afraid of the terrible stranger, confessed that what he surmised was indeed true. At once Mansingh's voice grew mellow.

He said, "My dear sister, how much are you going to get by betraying me to the police? A thousand gold mohurs! If you protect me from their clutch, I promise you ten thousand gold mohurs."

Out of both fear and temptation, the physician's wife hid the bandit in a sack and herself lay sprawled on the floor pretending distress. Soon Shastri returned with a contingent of guards. His wife wailed and reported that the bandit, after giving her a beating, had escaped.

As soon as the guards left, Mansingh emerged from his hiding. The amazed physician learnt what had transpired between his wife and the bandit. He applied medicine on the bandit's injured ankle and then asked, "When can I expect to receive the promised reward?"

Mansingh scribbled a note on a palm leaf and told the physician where to meet his lieutenants. "They will give you the mohurs. You will allow me to go only when you have returned satisfied."

This sounded quite sensible. The physician soon reached a deserted house following the bandit's direction. He was duly



handed over the mohurs, but the gang followed him and no sooner had he entered his home than they raided it and freed their leader and recovered the mohurs too. Over and above that, they took hold of the physician's young son. "You will get your son back only upon giving us a ransom of a thousand gold mohurs!" they said as they left.

Shastri and his wife almost swooned away in despair. But they had a wise and intelligent friend in one of the courtiers of the king. The friend advised Shastri to have courage and together they hit upon a certain

plan.

On the next night Mansingh appeared before Shastri and demanded, "What is your decision—to pay the ransom or to lose your son?"

"Did I not tell you only half an hour ago that I will pay the ransom? How can I arrange such a big sum unless you give me time till the next night?"

Mansingh was surprised. He understood that some other bandit had impersonated him and was trying to play hoax on Shastri as well as himself. He further learnt from Shastri that the fellow would meet him before an abandoned temple in a nearby forest.

"Keep the fellow engaged in conversation for a minute or two. I will watch him from a hiding and teach him a lesson," said Mansingh.

At the appointed hour, the next night, Shastri met the fellow before the temple. "Where is the money?" demanded the stranger veiled in black.

"Where is my son?" demanded Shastri in return. Mansingh who watched the scene, jumped forward and challenged the fellow, "How dare you pass yourself as Mansingh?"

But he had hardly finished saying this when the king's guards rushed out of the temple and captured him. The fellow in the dark veil was none other than the physician's friend.

Next, the deserted house which the physician had earlier discovered was raided. Mansingh's gang was captured too. Shastri's son was rescued.

The physician received the reward of a thousand gold mohurs from the king.





A MINISTER'S VIRTUE

"You are never wrong in your advice," King Jaivir of Pushpagiri used to tell his minister Ravindra.

"My lord, no man is perfect. I must be wrong somewhere," the minister used to reply humbly.

But both the king and the minister knew that the latter was only being humble. The king could not remember a single instance when the minister had given a wrong advice.

The king was sorry when the minister reached the age of retirement. The king heaped gifts on him and asked, "Can I do anything more to gladden you?"

"My lord, I have often heard

you say that what you expect of your officers, first and foremost, is a complete faith in you. My son, Subodh, who is well qualified for any high post, has great faith in your wisdom. I should be glad if he succeeds me as your minister," said Ravindra.

The king appointed Subodh to the post of minister, to begin with, for a period of one month. A fortnight later, the king called him to his private chamber and said, "I have received intelligence that our neighbouring king is planning an invasion of our land. What should we do?"

"What do you think to be the best course of action, my lord?" asked the new minister.

"Well, we can foil their plan by launching a sudden attack on the neighbouring territory," replied the king.

"That is an excellent idea. Let us do so," commented the new minister.

"But if we do so, the world will think that we were the aggressors," observed the king.

"That is quite right. The world will never know the motive of the wicked neighbour," agreed the new minister.

"I think the best course for us will be to keep our army on the alert," said the king.

"Nothing could be better than that, my lord," commented the new minister.

But is keeping them in the alert enough? Should we better not lead them to the frontier and show our strength to the enemy?" the king asked again.

"That should be the best thing to do, my lord, indeed, the very best!" replied Subodh.

A little later the king called his old minister, Ravindra, and said, "I have now realised that a total faith in me is a commendable quality in all the officers but one—the minister. The minister's virtue lies in his ability to be critical of my proposals and actions."

Ravindra understood what the king meant. He said, "My lord, you are right. And I have now realised that I had a weakness for my son. That led me to give you a wrong advice. I have proved what I used to say, that no man was perfect. I gave you one wrong advice, after all!"

Both laughed. The king made Subodh an officer in another department.



MONUMENTS OF INDIA

THE MONUMENTS OF ELLORA

Not far from the wonderful caves of Ajanta in Maharashtra (see the previous issue of your magazine) is situated another seat of great sculptural and artistic glory - Ellora. This is a meeting place of monuments belonging to three different schools of religion. At the right are Buddhist halls. At the left are Jain caves. At the centre stands a marvellous monument, a Hindu temple. Famous as the Kailasha Temple, this monument is cut out of a single rock with remarkable polishing of the stone. This is lavishly decorated with the sculptures of gods, goddesses and other beings. It was constructed in 8th century by Krishna I, the Rashtrakuta king.



OF GOOSE AND GEESE

Have you heard about the gentleman who wanted two geese, but could not remember the plural of goose? All he knew was, it won't do to write "gooses"! So he wrote to the nearest goosery (a place for keeping geese), "Please send me a goose." Then he added a post-script, saying, "Send me another goose too."

Even when we know the plural of goose to be geese or of mouse to be mice, we are often not sure of their group names. Let us take note of a few important words used for groups of animals or birds.

Herd of Cattle
Flock of Sheep
Pack of Hounds
Kennel of Dogs
Litter of Pups
Troop of Lions
Troop Monkeys
Stud of Horses

Flock of Birds
Brood of Hens
Clutch of Chickens
Covey of Partridges
Flight of Doves
Muster of Peacocks
Paddling of Ducks
Gaggle of Geese





LET US KNOW

What is Nobel Prize? Who gives it and to whom?

Rajendra S. Khairnar, Aurangabad.

Dr. Alfred Bernhard Nobel (1833 - 1896), Swedish chemist, engineer and the inventor of dynamite, left the bulk of his fortune (£1,750,000) in trust to conduct the award of five prizes annually in physics, chemistry, physiology or medicine, literature, and the cause of peace.

The Nobel Foundation, which executes Alfred Nobel's wish, distributed the first batch of prizes on December 10, 1901, Noble's 5th death anniversary. A gold medal, a citation, and a certain amount of money constitute the award. The amount varies from year to year depending on the income of the foundation; it is of several lakhs.

The candidates are chosen by the Royal Academy of Sciences, Stockholm (for physics and chemistry), the Caroline Medical Institute, Stockholm (for physiology or medicine), the Swedish Academy of Literature, Stockholm, and the academies of France and Spain (for literature), and a committee of five members elected by the Parliament of Norway (for peace).

The foundation is expanding its scope and instituting prizes in more fields.

The Nobel Prizes are open to the people of the entire world.

How did the Statue of Liberty come to exist?

Sanjay, Varanasi

The 151-foot high Statue of Liberty (with the pedestal the height is 305.5 feet) - the figure of a woman with a torch in the raised right hand - was made under the direction of the Sculptor Frederic Auguste Bartholdi.

It was inaugurated on October 28, 1886, at the harbour of New York, as a symbol of America's dedication to the ideals of freedom and democracy. It also symbolises friendship between U. S. A. and France, for the idea of such a monument was born in France and the French contributed substantially to its construction.

CHOOSE A TITLE AND WIN A REWARD

(You are invited to choose a title for the following story and write it down on a post card and mail it to 'Story Title Contest', Chandamama, 2 & 3, Arcot Road, Madras 600 026, to reach us by the 20th of January. A reward of Rs. 25.00 will go to the best entry, which will be published in the March '78 issue. Please do not use the same card for sending the Photo-Caption entry.)



It was not easy for a commoner to meet the king. Only noblemen and high officers were allowed into the court.

But one morning the gate-keeper announced to the king, "My lord, a villager prays to see you. He informs me that he is going to be a man of a million rupees worth very soon."

"Isn't that rather strange? Well, admit him!" said the king.

The villager was duly admitted. The curious king enquired about his family, education and other things and found out that he was an illiterate poor fellow with no claim to any distinction. There was not even an iota of a chance of his growing rich either.

"What did you mean by claiming that you were going to be a man of a million rupees worth?" demanded the king.

"My lord, when the people will come to know that a beggar like me had an audience with the king, how will they look upon me? Will I not be considered a man of a million rupees worth?" replied the villager.

The amused king gave the fellow a handsome reward.

Result of Story Title Contest held in November Issue

The prize is awarded to :

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- Winning captions will be announced in MARCH issue.
- Write your entry on a POST CARD, specify the month, give your full name, address, age and post to :

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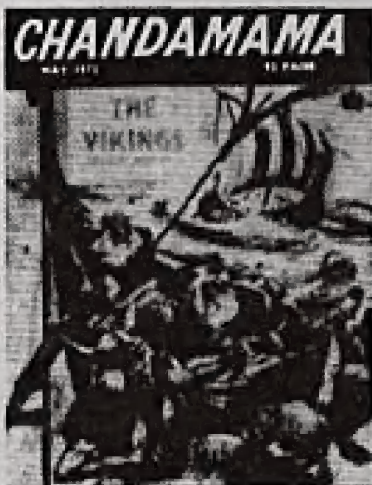
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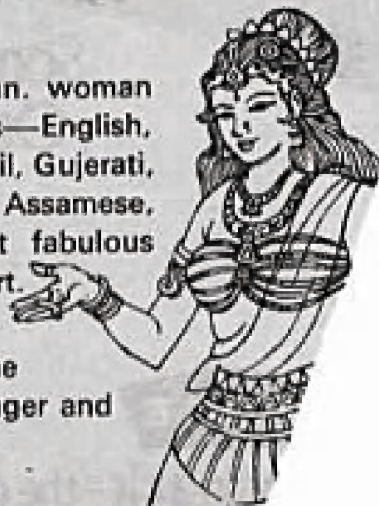
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